



State of Arizona

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Governor Jan Brewer Signs Legislation to Preserve Religious Freedom for Faith-Based Groups

Narrow Legislation Balances Access to Health Services with Protection of Religious Freedom

PHOENIX – Governor Jan Brewer today signed into law HB 2625, legislation that authorizes religiously-affiliated employers to exempt contraceptive services from their employees' health insurance plans. The new law will apply exclusively to those entities whose religious beliefs are central to their operating principles, and for whom providing coverage for contraception could pose a moral conflict or religious objection.

"In its final form, this bill is about nothing more than preserving the religious freedom to which we are all Constitutionally-entitled," said Governor Brewer. "Mandating that a religious institution provide a service in direct contradiction with its faith would represent an obvious encroachment upon the 1st Amendment."

Currently, state law allows a narrow scope of nonprofit, faith-based institutions to opt out of contraceptive coverage, provided that the institution primarily employs and serves individuals who share the religious tenets of the institution.

HB 2625 moderately expands the definition of a "religiously-affiliated employer" to include any organization whose articles of incorporation explicitly state a religiously-motivated purpose, and whose religious beliefs play a fundamental role in its function. It is anticipated that there are few employers who will qualify for this exemption under the bill.

Arizona is among 20 states that allow certain employers to cite a religious-exemption in refusing to offer contraception coverage.

"Let's not forget why we're having this discussion: It's ObamaCare that created this issue by forcing church-affiliated employers and non-profits to offer services in violation of their religious faith," said Governor Brewer. "With this common sense bill, we can ensure that Arizona women have access to the health services they need and religious institutions have their faith and freedom protected."

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